

SERMON TEXT: Matthew 27:15-26

Vs. 15 - Now it was the governor's custom at the Feast to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd.

Vs. 16 - At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas.

Vs. 17 - So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?"

Vs. 18 - For he knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him.

Vs. 19 - While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, **his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him."**

Vs. 20 - But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed.

Vs. 21 - "Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" asked the governor. "Barabbas," they answered.

Vs. 22 - "What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?" Pilate asked. They all answered, "Crucify him!"

Vs. 23 - "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"

Vs. 24 - When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water **and washed his hands** in front of the crowd. "**I am innocent of this man's blood,**" he said. "It is your responsibility!"

Vs. 25 - All the people answered, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!"

Vs. 26 - Then he released Barabbas to them. **But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him** over to be crucified.

GREETING: Jesus says: Come to ME, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. rest for your souls. (Matt. 11:28-29 -NIV)

As we continue with the Sermon Series for this Lent Season entitled "*The Hands of the Passion*", we are making our way to the cross as we see Jesus Who spreads out *His hands* upon the Cross of Calvary (John 19:17-18) for the sin of the World (Heb. 10:10, I Tim. 2:5-6, I John 2:1-2), and then shows those same nail pierced hands three days later to His disciples behind the locked doors as Jesus declared to them "*Peace be With You.*" (John 20:19-27)

This evening we see the hands of Pontius Pilate

On the first Pentecost Sunday after the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus, the Apostle Peter was addressing a crowd in Jerusalem of about 3,000.

During the course of that sermon Peter referred to Pontius Pilate when he made the statement:

"The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus. You handed Him over to be killed, and your disowned Him before Pilate, though he had decided / determined to let Him go." (Acts 3:13 - NIV)

Pilate, in his heart, had decided to let Jesus go at that kangaroo court.

Pilate's wife had even warned him not to have anything to do with Jesus!

Vs. 19 - While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, **his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him."**

In an attempt to let Jesus go, Pontius Pilate resorted to "The governor's custom" to let a prisoner go each year at the time of THE FEAST (Passover) as requested by the people.

As part of the plan, Pontius Pilate found a "Notorious Prisoner" named Barabbas hoping that the people in the crowd would realize how fanatical and unreasonable their desire was to crucify Jesus, Who was innocent and had done nothing wrong, in comparison to BARABBAS.

And so Pilate had Jesus and Barabbas stand before the crowd, the mob, and Pilate asked them:

Vs. 17 - "**Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?**"

To Pilate's dismay, the crowd did NOT ask for Jesus to be released, instead the mob asked for Barabbas!

Just think what must have been going through the mind of Barabbas?

As someone recently asked me; "Do you think that Barabbas became a believer?"

Just as Jesus took the place of all of us by suffering the punishment and the hell that we deserve, Jesus literally, visually took the place of Barabbas.

Pontius Pilate then asked the mob:

Vs. 22 - "**What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?**" Pilate asked.

And the mob, which was being stirred up by the Chief priests, cried out:

Vs. 22 - "**Crucify him!**" What a shame!

Pontius Pilate, then in an attempt to cover his tracks did something that has become a familiar statement: "He Washed His Hands of the incident!"

Vs. 24 - When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water **and washed his hands** in front of the crowd. "**I am innocent of this man's blood,**" he said. "It is your responsibility!"

Ask yourself: Is Pilate really innocent?

Was Pilate trying to convince himself of something that he knew was not true?

Then Pilate continues down the street of self preservation by:

Vs. 26 - Then he released Barabbas to them. But **he had Jesus flogged, and handed him** over to be crucified.

The question has also been asked by some: Did Pontius Pilate become a believer?

Keep in mind that after Jesus rose from the dead, if you were to look in Scripture at those whom Jesus appeared to you will find recorded on the pages of Scripture that Jesus only showed Himself to believers.

(The number of believers in Jerusalem was said to be about 120 according to Acts 1:15)

We do see Pontius Pilate show some strength when he had the sign posted over Jesus on the cross which read: “**This Is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.**” In three languages – Latin – Greek & Aramaic.

(Mt 27:37; Mr 15:26; Lu 23:38, John 19:19) And when the Jews tried to persuade Pilate to change the sign to read: “He said that He was the King of the Jews, and Pilate responded, “**What I have written I have written!**”

We might be tempted to think something in the line of: “Boy, I could never be or do what Pilate did!”

But we have to ask ourselves: Have we always stood up for Jesus and what is right according to His Word when opportunity presents itself? Have we always confidently told people? “I believe in Jesus as my One and Only Savior from Sin, death and the devil!”

Do all our acquaintances know that we are believers in the Lord Jesus, or do we keep it a secret from some who we know will put us down, or argue with us?

Do we always stand up for what is right and correct according to Scripture, or do we sometimes keep quiet to save face? And the List goes on.

Thankfully when Jesus died on the cross of Calvary, Jesus made payment for Pontius Pilate and his sin of self preservation, AND Jesus made payment for all the times that we sinned by not standing up for the Truth of Christ Jesus our Risen Savior. AMEN

THEME: Hands of Self Preservation